

**RI STATE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
NRCS CONFERENCE ROOM
60 QUAKER LANE
WARWICK, RI 02886**

MEETING MINUTES

November 13, 2013

4:00 PM

Eric Offenberg called the meeting to order at 4:00.

Present: RISCC Chair, Eric Offenberg; NRICD: Gina DeMarco; ERICD: Jessica Blackledge, Emerson Wildes; SRICD: J.Eric Scherer, Harriet Powell, Clarkson Collins, Kate Bousquet; RISCC: Ramona LeBlanc; DEM: Ken Ayars; NRCS: Pooh Vongkhamdy; RIACD: Dick Went, Jean Lynch.

I. Minutes: A motion was made to accept the September 11, 2013 minutes: Harriet/Ken; unanimous.

II. Financial Report: A motion was made to approve the August and

September

financial report as presented and the revised 2013-14 budget: Harriet/Ken; unanimous. In future, a Profit & Loss: Budget vs. Actual and Balance Sheet will be presented at each meeting. P & L by Class will be posted on website.

III. Agreements:

Discussion tabled.

IV. Old Business:

A. FFOS

1) Tom Sproul Report: Tabled.

2) Letter to Enrollees: A letter to current FFOS enrollees with revisions by DEM was presented.

3) Fee Structure: Spreadsheet for costs incurred in the development of a comprehensive farm conservation plan was distributed. Discussion of the value of such a plan as well as the potentially prohibitive cost to farmers was discussed. The previously established working group will meet again to develop 3 alternatives for farm designation enrollees: 1) a plan landowner can develop independently, using Resource Guide, which will need to meet USDA minimum standards; 2) a basic conservation plan that meets USDA standards, developed by SCC planners and 3) a full conservation plan as currently being developed by SCC planners which will be more

comprehensive and provide additional benefit to the farmer. A motion was made to give this subcommittee to approve these alternatives as well as the letter to be sent to enrollees: Harriet/Ken: unanimous.

The following suggestions were made:

- ▪ ground truth the fee structure for a period of time
- ▪ develop a bullet point list of benefits for full farm plan
- ▪ further develop documentation of tax benefit to farmers enrolled in FFOS

4) Open Space Mapping: Tabled.

B. MOU: Tabled.

C. SESC Handbook: Tabled.

D. Engineering RFP: Tabled.

E. Board Recruitment Update: Tabled.

F. Cash Reserve Policy: It was decided that the cash reserve at the end of the FY 2013 should be maintained. This amount represents approximately 13% of the FY 2014 budget.

G. SCC/FFOS Appointments: Harriet will speak to her contact in Governor's office as to most effective way to submit names for appointment/re-appointment.

H. Legislative Subcommittee Report: The subcommittee recommended that the following changes in legislation be sought:

1) Increase size of Districts Boards

2) Change language in legislation to stipulate that each District Chair

or their designee be a member of the SCC.

3) Increase size of the SCC, continuing to ensure equal representation from all Districts

A motion was made to accept these recommendations: Ken/Harriet: unanimous;

I. Retreat Report: Tabled.

J. Other: None.

V. New Business

A. CD's Role in DEM's Organic Certification Program: Tabled.

B. Personnel Subcommittee: A motion was made to form a permanent subcommittee for personnel issues: Harriet/Ken: unanimous;

VI. Reports

DEM: There is a possible funding source for DEM to have baseline documentation of easement properties and would like to discuss fee structure with CD's for such a service. DEM will provide standards and SRICD will develop pricing proposal.

NRCS: Written report distributed. State Conservationist expressed concern that recommendations of STT subcommittee to establish minimum thresholds in ranking NRCS applications will discriminate against small farmers.

ERICD: The Board has established preliminary policy and procedure for new Directors;

3 references, a BCI and attendance at three Board meetings will be required before appointment as Associate Directors. Minimum length of time as Associate Directors before appointment/election to full Directors is TBD. Board is also working on a procedure to fill current skills gaps in Board composition.

SRICD: Written report distributed. Annual Dinner was recently held at Matunuck Oyster Bar with a variety of conservation awards given. The Annual Report has been completed. Town funding request letters are being developed.

NRICD: District is working with Town of Scituate on a 319 project and is responsible for oversight of the installation of 10 rain gardens or other LID projects to address ground water issues in a focused area of North Scituate. RFP went out and proposals are being reviewed. Another RFP for a farm manager for the property at Snake Den has been developed. Gina is working with Town of Johnston and State regarding properties that will be acquired thorough EWP agreement.

RIACD: Dick report that NACD is advocating against proposal to move decision making authority away from State Conservationists.

VII. Other

A motion was made to appoint Carl Sawyer and Harvey Buford as Directors of SRICD and to appoint Marc Tremblay and Matt Tracy as Directors of NRICD: Ken/Harriet: unanimous;

Meeting adjourned at 6:11.